



Michigan Nonprofit Association

Thank you Chairwoman Emmons for the opportunity to testify on SB 905. My name is Christina Kuo, I am the Sr. Director of Public Policy and Public Affairs at the Michigan Nonprofit Association. MNA represents the nonprofit sector in Michigan; which is made out of 47,000 nonprofits in Michigan. We have over 850 member organizations across the state, which range from United Ways all the way down to local parent booster clubs.

The Michigan Nonprofit Association opposes SB 905. The bill creates a number of problems, both practical and values-based, for nonprofit organizations. On the values-based side nonprofits want to provide individuals with opportunities who want to make a difference by helping their neighbors as volunteers. Volunteerism is an essential element of American civil society. Community based volunteerism is one of the unifying experiences in our country and a powerful problem-solving resource. The act of volunteering is, and should remain, about an ethic of doing-good for others, without restrictions, punitive mandate, or state-required quid pro quo.

On the practical side, we know nonprofits play a central role in promoting volunteerism, providing quality volunteer opportunities, and ensuring every volunteer is willing and able to fulfill their responsibilities. These organizations rely on well-trained, highly engaged, and an adequately monitored and supported volunteer-base to meet their missions. The volume of "volunteers" this legislation would bring through the doors of organizations would overwhelm, even the best-run volunteer programs.

Contrary to popular perception, volunteers are not free. They require an enormous amount of resources – both in staff-time and materials. Many of you know, from volunteers on your own political campaigns, it requires hours and even days worth of prep before volunteers come through your door. A sudden surge in volunteer capacity would be like having space and work for 2 interns in your office and then suddenly you are being asked to accommodate 45 of them. An organization never wants to be in a position to turn-away, but if the volume of volunteers is too great, then the nonprofit may have no other choice. This just means a lose-lose situation for both the organization and the individual being turned away. The group may be losing a volunteer who would be huge benefit to the organization and the individual has lost an opportunity to engage in an integral part of American civil society and give back to their community. And if that person being turned away also happens to need the hours to fulfill the requirements set out in this bill, they are losing much needed assistance.

If the Michigan Legislature's goal is to help nonprofits and to encourage volunteering, MNA would be more than happy to work with members in crafting

policies that truly promote the value of meaningful volunteerism for Michigan's citizens and communities. The nonprofit sector is more than aware of our role in helping to build a better Michigan, and we continue to work with communities on this goal by promoting an ethic of life-long engagement for the public good. To help us meet this objective, we strongly urge lawmakers to avoid developing any public policies that would dilute the altruistic underpinnings of volunteerism and threaten the ability of nonprofits to advance their missions.